

Testimony: Dave Murphy - Public Health Committee, the Connecticut Assembly
March 15, 2013

I want thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the growing number of citizens from across the country dedicated to winning mandatory labeling of genetically engineered food here in the U.S.

My name is Dave Murphy, I'm the founder of Food Democracy Now!, a grassroots movement of more than 400,000 farmers and citizens dedicated to reforming our food and agricultural system to create a more sustainable future.

Most recently I had the honor of being the co-chair of the Prop 37 campaign in California, where more than 6 million Californians voted for labeling of genetically engineered foods.

I want to thank Tara Cook-Littman for her tireless efforts on this bill and for inviting **my partner Lisa Stokke and I to testify on GMO labeling to** speak to the importance of what you are undertaking in this bill and what it means to millions of Americans waiting for one brave state legislature and one brave governor to do the right thing and pass a GMO labeling bill over the objections of the agricultural biotech industry.

We live in Iowa, where 97% of soybeans and 91% of corn are genetically engineered. We are literally surrounded by an ocean of GMO crops.

At Food Democracy Now! we have stood up for GMO labeling from the very beginning, because we believe that Americans have a Right to Know what's in their food and corporations don't have the right to hide their ingredients.

In the U.S., in a democratic and free society Americans are supposed to make informed personal decisions. Without proper labeling, the crop biotech industry is infringing daily on our democratic and economic rights.

Currently GMO labeling is a basic right already enjoyed by citizens in 62 countries around the world - including progressive democracies such as the European Union, Russia, China, South Africa and Saudi Arabia.

As mothers, fathers and grandparents we are especially concerned by the fact that the same companies that profit from the approval of GMO crops are the same ones who have failed to disclose serious human health and environmental problems in the past.

The biotech industry likes to claim that GMOs are the most tested products in our food supply, but nothing could be further from the truth. Currently the FDA relies on safety testing conducted by corporations like Monsanto and DuPont, not independent scientists.

In the 1990s, the FDA's own scientists believed that genetically engineering could lead to an increase in toxicants and allergenic properties in the new GMO crops.

Today we are here in Connecticut to launch a nation wide Coalition of 37 States that have banded together with the common goal of winning mandatory labeling of genetically engineered foods in the U.S. From Maine to Hawaii, Vermont to Washington.

Today, we stand before you to affirm our rights as citizens to know what's in our food, not as consumers.

We dream of the day when our government will stand up for our rights, the rights that our Founding Fathers died for. We dream of the day when mothers can go to a grocery store and intelligently discern the basic ingredients on a food package that they are buying to feed their children and families.

It is our birthright in a free and democratic society to have openness and transparency in the marketplace, I ask you today to join with millions of Americans across the U.S. who seek this basic right. I hope that you will pass this bill and the Constitution state will become the first state to require the mandatory labeling of genetically engineered foods.

Prop 37

Coalition of 37 states

Polls regularly show that more than 90% of Americans want labeling of genetically engineered foods,

2011 poll found broad bipartisan support, with 89% of Republicans, 90% of Independents and 93% of Democrats favor GMO labeling in the U.S.

It's so unique at the patent office that it gets a patent, but down at the FDA – there's no difference at all. Nor any need for mandatory long-term safety tests. Which have never been submitted to the FDA for any approval – corporate science – or cigarette science.

Monsanto says –

1. 'Monsanto should not have to vouchsafe the safety of biotech food," he said. "Our interest is in selling as much of it as possible. Assuring its safety is the F.D.A.'s job." Phil Angell Director of Corporate Communications at Monsanto told Michael Pollan for his 1998 New York Times article – Playing God in the Garden

FDA says –

2. *“Ultimately, it is the food producer who is responsible for assuring safety.”*

— FDA, “Statement of Policy: Foods Derived from New Plant Varieties”

(GMO Policy), Federal Register, Vol. 57, No. 104 (1992), p. 22991

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